

Press Conference  
Thursday, August 27, 2009  
3 p.m., Governor's Mansion

Governor Barbour makes opening comments

Governor introduces Ellen Ratner and Cholene (SHO-lene) Espinoza

Governor calls on First Lady for closing comments

Q & A

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Opening comments

Four years ago come Saturday, the worst natural disaster in American history obliterated the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Hurricane Katrina caused more damage than you would wish on your worst enemy.

All of you here today know that story of lives, property, and livelihoods lost.

But out of that dark day came the light of new beginnings.

So, the story now is of recovery, rebuilding and renewal, and the people of the Gulf Coast are making progress every day.

Marsha and I are extremely proud of south Mississippians ... and fully aware that the progress would have been so much slower and so much harder without the dedication and devotion of our two guests here today - Ellen Ratner and Cholene (SHO-lene) Espinoza - and thousands of people like them.

People who literally took the bull by the horns, got busy as volunteers, cheerleaders, organizers, and national leaders in helping south Mississippi get the help it needed.

And, along the way, they embarked on a project that's dear to my heart - the Marsha Barbour Community Center .

We'll have the grand opening and official dedication on Saturday down on the Gulf Coast, but I wanted people here in the Capital area to get a glimpse of the goodness that can come of tragedy.

I want Ellen and Cholene to tell you about this wonderful new facility, not because the center carries Marsha's name, but because it truly fills a need ... it fills a big hole left by Katrina in the lives of so many people.

They may live in New York but we know their hearts are in Mississippi.

Ellen, Cholene, we thank you for what you've done and continue to do for Mississippi.

((CALL ON ELLEN AND CHOLENE TO SPEAK))

## BACKGROUND

They want to recognize Rev. Rosemary Williams of the Mt. Zion United Methodist church of DeLisle, who shared her vision of building a community education center when Ellen and Cholene went to deliver supplies to her church and congregants.

Rev. Rosemary as she is called, was a school teacher for over two decades before being called to the ministry. Her church is a cornerstone of the community known for nourishment of the mind and body as well as the soul. As reverends from the Coast know, they were the front line of

relief and recovery coordinating volunteers. Volunteers have been staying at her church off and on since the storm.

Shantrell Nicks is Rev. Rosemary's niece and an attorney in Gulfport. Shantrell and her children met Ellen on that flight and that was the beginning of what connected us to this community. Shantrell has not only done the legal work, but also worked hand and hand and provided leadership without which this project would not have come to completion.

Rev. Theodore Williams is Rev. Rosemary's husband and also a founder. Rev. Theo's church, St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Pass Christian, was wiped out by the storm surge, but rebuilt with volunteers and a grant from the Bush Clinton Katrina Fund. He was also a school teacher and musician.

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((CALL ON FIRST LADY TO CLOSE))

((Q & A))